

# A Pathway for Improving Early Childhood Mental Health in Utah

The Utah Early Childhood Mental Health Working Group's proposed strategies and tactics

# Utah Early Childhood Mental Health Working Group

Organization	Organization
Cambia Health Foundation	University of Utah
The Children’s Center Utah	Utah Community Builders Foundation
Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health	Utah Department of Health
Governor’s Office	Utah Department of Human Services
Huntsman Mental Health Institute	Utah Hospital Association
Intermountain Healthcare	Utah House of Representatives
Intermountain Medical Group	Utah Parent Center
Jerry Seiner Dealerships	Utah State Board of Education
Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute	Voices for Utah Children
Office of Child Care, Department of Workforce Services	Wasatch Behavioral Health
Primary Children’s Center for Safe and Healthy Families	Wasatch Pediatrics Behavioral Health
Primary Children’s Hospital	

# Utah Early Childhood Mental Health Working Group

## **Vision:**

As the youngest state in the nation, Utah will be recognized as a leader in Early Childhood Mental Health by protecting and investing in the emotional well-being of its children, and is committed to eliminating disparities in health and well-being for all population groups.

# Steps to Creating the 2022 Pathway Report: “A Pathway for Improving Early Childhood Mental Health in Utah

## Process:

January  
to  
August  
2021

- Heard from leaders with diverse backgrounds related to Early Childhood Mental Health who provided information and facilitated group discussions.

July  
to  
October  
2021

- Began developing strategies and tactics aimed at strengthening Utah’s Early Childhood Mental Health systems and outcomes.
- Began discussing ways to measure success and improvement.

November  
to  
December  
2021

- Continued to refine vision & mission statements, guiding principles, strategies, and tactics. Created a draft of the Pathway report.
- Ready! Resilient! Utah Early Childhood Mental Health Summit and working luncheon.

January  
to  
May 2022

- Formed three subgroups focused on identifying action steps for the Pathway Report strategies and tactics the workgroup deemed high, near-term priorities.

# ***Eight Strategies (and Over 30 Tactics)***

**#1 - Create a baseline estimate of need for early childhood mental health services.**

**#2 - Collaborate and coordinate with a wide variety of partners to support early childhood mental health through education, resources, and early childhood caregiver and provider support.**

**#3 - Increase early childhood mental health awareness, promotion, and prevention-related activities to increase understanding and reduce stigma related to mental health.**

**#4 - Increase integration of physical and behavioral health for children.**

**#5 - Create incentives to help develop and retain a robust early childhood mental health workforce.**

**#6 - Develop and provide early childhood mental health training for all early childhood caregivers and providers.**

**#7 - Estimate the long-term value of early childhood mental health in Utah.**

**#8 - Decrease disparities in early childhood mental health access and outcomes for different population groups.**

# Priorities

1. Create a baseline estimate of need → Increase screenings using ASQ<sup>®</sup>:SE
2. Increase integration of child physical and behavioral health → Explore how best to leverage the Medicaid Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) benefit
3. Increase early childhood mental health awareness → Develop early childhood mental health public education campaigns

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## **Strategy Subgroup #1:**

**Create a baseline estimate of need for early childhood mental health services**

# Strategy 1

Create a baseline estimate of need for early childhood mental health services.

## Tactic

Using the ASQ<sup>®</sup>:SE, conduct universal mental health screenings.



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## **Strategy Subgroup #2:**

**Increase integration of physical and behavioral health for children**

# Strategy 4

Increase integration of physical and behavioral health for children.

## Tactic

Explore how best to leverage the Medicaid Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment (EPSDT) benefit to expand access to mental health screenings, assessments, and treatment to Medicaid-enrolled children, including in school-based settings.

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## **Strategy Subgroup #3:**

**Increase early childhood mental health awareness, promotion, and prevention-related activities to increase understanding and reduce stigma related to mental health**

# Strategy 3

Increase ECMH awareness, promotion, and prevention-related activities, which reduce stigma for mental health services.

## Tactic

Develop ECMH public education campaign(s) that increase awareness of the importance of:

1. Early childhood development
2. The value of early assessments
3. The availability of existing resources